

# **ELIGIBILITY GUIDE FOR LENDERS**

The Eastern Eligibility Center processes original eligibility determinations as well as restorations of previously used home loan entitlement for veterans located in the eastern half of the United States and overseas. The Center serves all veterans in the following states:

Alabama	Maryland	Pennsylvania
Connecticut	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
Delaware	Michigan	South Carolina
District of Columbia	Mississippi	Tennessee
Florida	New Hampshire	Vermont
Georgia	New Jersey	Virginia
Indiana	New York	West Virginia
Kentucky	North Carolina	
Maine	Ohio	

## **MAILING ADDRESS FOR APPLICATIONS**

- The preferred mailing address is:

VA Eligibility Center  
PO Box 20729  
Winston-Salem, NC 27120

- Use of the above mailing address assures handling by Center personnel only. However, for those who prefer to use an overnight mail service the address is:

VA Eligibility Center  
251 North Main St.  
Winston-Salem, NC 27155

## **TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- The telephone number is:

1-888-244-6711 (Service is available 8am - 4pm E.S.T. each weekday)

## **E-MAIL**

- The e-mail address is:

NCELIGIB@vba.va.gov

- Detailed information regarding qualifying criteria can be found at [www.vba.va.gov/bln/loan/elig2.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/loan/elig2.htm) and a description of what is acceptable proof of military service can be found at [www.vba.va.gov/bln/loan/faqelig.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/loan/faqelig.htm) as part of a list of frequently asked questions regarding eligibility for a home loan.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- To request a Certificate of Eligibility, the veteran must complete VA Form 26-1880, Request for a Certificate of Eligibility for VA Home Loan Benefits and submit it to the Center.
- VA Form 26-1880 can be obtained at [www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms1.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms1.htm), by calling /writing/e-mailing the Eastern Eligibility Center, from a local VA Regional Office, or from a lender who participates in the VA home loan program.
- If the veteran has been discharged from regular active duty, it may be possible to make a determination without the veteran providing evidence of military service. However, **it is best to provide such evidence with VA Form 26-1880** to prevent possible delays in processing the request.

## PROOF OF MILITARY SERVICE

- Acceptable documentation of military service depends on whether the veteran served on regular active duty or in the Selected Reserves or National Guard, or whether the veteran remains on regular active duty or in the Selected Reserves or National Guard.
- For a veteran discharged from regular active duty after January 1, 1950, a copy of DD 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty should be included with VA Form 26-1880. If discharged after October 1, 1979, Copy 4 of DD 214 should be submitted.
- If the veteran is still serving on regular active duty, include an **original** statement of service signed by, or by the direction of, the adjutant, personnel officer, or unit commander or higher headquarters. It should show the date of entry into veteran's current tour of duty, list all prior service, and all previous service numbers. It must be identified with the veteran's social security number and date of birth. (Faxed copies and photocopies are not acceptable.)

- If veteran was discharged from the Selected Reserves or the National Guard, include copies of documentation of at least 6 years of honorable service. If discharged from the Army or Air Force National Guard, submit NGB Form 22, Report of Separation and Record of Service, or NGB Form 23, Retirement Points Accounting, or it's equivalent. If discharged from the Selected Reserve, submit a copy of the latest annual points statement and evidence of honorable service. Unfortunately, there is no single form used by the Reserves or National Guard similar to the DD Form 214. It is veteran's responsibility to furnish adequate documentation of at least 6 years of honorable service.
- If veteran is still serving in the Selected Reserves of the National Guard, include an **original** statement of service signed by the veteran's Commanding Officer or Personnel Officer. It should show the date of entry into veteran's current tour of duty, list all prior service, and all previous service numbers. It must be identified with the veteran's social security number and date of birth. (Faxed copies and photocopies are not acceptable.) At least 6 years of honorable service must be documented.

#### MISSING SERVICE RECORDS

- GSA Standard Form 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records, is used to apply for copies of military service records regardless of whether the veteran served on regular active duty or in the Selected Reserves/National Guard. This form is NOT processed by VA. Standard Form 180 is completed and mailed to the appropriate custodian of military service records. Instructions are provided on the reverse of the form to assist in determining the correct mailing address.

#### PROCESSING TIME

- All applications are processed in accordance with receipt date by the Center regardless of the mode of submission.
- The turnaround time (including mailing time) for complete applications not requiring development normally runs about 10 days.
- Telephone contact personnel at the Center only have access to records of processed applications. So, it is best to wait at least 10 days after mailing before calling for the status of an application.
- A relatively small percentage of applications require development which can extend the processing period. This development might involve return to the requester for additional information or it might involve development internal to VA. In some cases, it will be necessary to research information regarding a prior VA loan(s) or resolve such issues as character of discharge, service-connected disability, or surviving spouse

benefits. When a delay for internal VA development is required, the requester is always advised by letter.

### **WALK-INS**

- Veterans who require walk-in service can visit the Eastern Eligibility Center in Winston-Salem during the hours of 8am-4pm E.S.T. each weekday to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility.
- Since most Regional Offices and Regional Loan Centers provide limited walk-in service, if any, veterans should contact the RO or RLC to determine their walk-in policy before making a trip to a VA office.

### **COMPUTER-GENERATED CERTIFICATES**

- The Eastern Eligibility Center issues a computer-generated Certificate of Eligibility.
- These certificates retain the distinctive colors to designate whether the veteran has regular active duty eligibility (green) or Selected Reserve/National Guard eligibility (buff).
- The “checked boxes” which appear on pre-printed certificate forms (VA Forms 26-8320 and 26-8320a) have been eliminated. Computer-generated certificates have been simplified so that they only contain information applicable to the named veteran.
- Computer-generated certificates also have an electronic facsimile signature.

### **UPDATES**

- There is no need to have a certificate updated (regardless of the type or when it was issued).
- A possible exception would be a certificate which is contingent on an active duty certification at loan closing when the veteran has already been discharged.
- Entitlement is \$36,000 minus any entitlement previously used (unless previously used entitlement has been excluded and entitlement restored).

### **PRIOR USAGE**

- The lender should try to determine if the veteran has remaining entitlement.

- A blank certificate is not always an indication that the veteran has full entitlement. There are several ways to determine prior usage: credit report, VA 26-1880, item 8, and the VA 26-1802a, line 23.

## **RESERVISTS**

- A reservist certificate will show entitlement code 11 for first-time use.
- A reservist certificate has an expiration date (currently September 30, 2007).
- Unfortunately, there is no single form used by the Reserves or National Guard similar to the DD Form 214. It is applicant's responsibility to furnish adequate documentation of at least 6 years of honorable service.
- Reservists are required to pay a higher funding fee.

## **ENTITLEMENT FOR UNREMARIED SURVIVING SPOUSES**

- The unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran who died on active duty or as the result of a service-connected disability is eligible for home loan benefits. If an eligible surviving spouse remarried after the veteran's death, but the marriage has since been terminated, the surviving spouse may be eligible for home loan benefits.
- To apply for a surviving spouse Certificate of Eligibility, submit VA Form 26-1817.
- A loan obtained with a surviving spouse Certificate of Eligibility requires an affidavit at closing that the surviving spouse has not remarried.

## **SURVIVING SPOUSE ACCESS TO IRRRL**

- The surviving spouse of a veteran is entitled to "roll-over" an existing VA loan to a lower interest rate (IRRRL) if both were obligated on the original loan (regardless of the cause of the veteran's death).

## **RESTORATION OF ENTITLEMENT**

- The veteran's prior VA loan must be paid in full. The veteran may need to submit evidence with VA Form 26-1880. A letter from the lender which states the loan is paid in full and identifies the VA loan number and property address is acceptable. VA can also accept a copy of the HUD-1, Settlement Statement, showing payoff of first mortgage loan. The veteran can also submit a copy of a cancelled/satisfied Deed of Trust, Mortgage Satisfaction, Release of Lien, or other legal document from the Register of

Deeds Office in the county where the property was located (document name varies by state).

- A veteran is entitled to a one time restoration of entitlement if his/her prior VA loan has been paid in full even though the veteran has not disposed of the property obtained with the prior loan. If a veteran has already used this one time restoration, it will be noted on the Certificate of Eligibility. Any future restoration requires disposal of all property obtained with a VA loan.
- A veteran's entitlement may also be restored to obtain a regular refinance loan when a veteran has, or at one time had, a VA loan on a property, and wishes to obtain a new VA loan to refinance some type of lien on the same property. The loan being obtained will be a cash-out refinancing loan, not IRRRL, and the veteran must meet all qualifying criteria including credit and income standards and occupancy. Applications for this type of restoration must be accompanied by a copy of an application to a lender to refinance property the veteran already owns and a signed certification that the property to be refinanced is the same property for which the veteran previously used the entitlement to be restored.
- When applying for restoration of entitlement, the veteran should submit all available Certificates of Eligibility previously issued to him or her.

### **FORECLOSURES**

- When a veteran's previous VA guaranteed loan has been terminated by foreclosure, deed in lieu of foreclosure or compromise sale (short sale), VA may have sustained a loss because of a claim payment to the lender. Even if the veteran was released from liability on the loan and/or the debt was waived, the Government may still have suffered a loss on the loan.
- The law does not permit restoration of the veteran's eligibility until the Government's loss has been repaid in full.

### **LOAN ASSUMPTIONS**

- Entitlement is not automatically restored with an approved Release of Liability. A veteran's entitlement can only be restored if the assumer is also an eligible veteran who will occupy the property as a personal residence and is willing to substitute his or her available entitlement for that of the original veteran. Otherwise, the original veteran cannot have entitlement restored until the assumer has paid the loan in full.